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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6570
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC//DDI/OEA//
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DB-Z//
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0645
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7088
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 7149
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 1634
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 5462
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 4388
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 7599
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1869
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3174
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2249
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; December 28, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

All, All TVs
ROK Wins \$40 Billion UAE Nuclear Deal

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

According to a December 23 report by the U.S. military magazine Stars and Stripes, second Infantry Division officials are requiring soldiers with children living in the ROK to pick up new child-friendly protective masks. The new model is being provided to children who are 8 years old and younger to protect them against a potential North Korean chemical attack. (Dong-a)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

A 23-year old Nigerian man who claimed ties to al-Qaida was charged with trying to blow up a Detroit-bound airliner on Christmas Day, just a month after his father warned U.S. officials of concerns about his son's religious beliefs. According to U.S. authorities, the suspect told them he had obtained explosive chemicals and a syringe that were sewn into his underwear from a bomb expert in Yemen associated with al-Qaida. (All, All TVs)

An ROK activist said on December 27 that Robert Park, a Korean-American Christian missionary, entered North Korea on Christmas Day carrying a letter for North Korean leader Kim Jong-il that urges him to release political prisoners and shut down the concentration camps where they are held. (All, All TVs)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-N. Korea

Most ROK media ran front-and inside-page reports quoting Jo Sung-rae, head of the Seoul-based human rights group Pax Koreana, as saying that Robert Park, a Korean-American Christian missionary,

entered North Korea carrying a letter for North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in which he calls attention to the tens of thousands of political prisoners believed held in the communist state. Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo observed in an inside-page analysis that Park's illegal crossing could complicate U.S. efforts to persuade North Korea to return to the stalled Six-Party Talks, because the regime considers any outside criticism of its top leader a grave challenge. According to the newspaper, Park said he had no intention of leaving the North voluntarily and did not want the USG to negotiate his release. JoongAng noted that North Korea may choose one of three options. First, North Korea may use Park's crossing as a negotiating ploy as it did with the two U.S. journalists Euna Lee and Laura Ling. Second, since Pyongyang said it would keep cooperating with Washington to narrow their differences following its first bilateral meeting with the U.S., the North may try to settle this issue through behind-the-scenes contact. Third, the North may forcibly repatriate Park from the country to fend off international criticism for its detention of a human rights activist.

-Airline Attack

Most ROK media gave wide coverage to reports on Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the 23-year old Nigerian man who was charged with trying to blow up a Detroit-bound plane on Christmas Day. According to news reports, the man's father, a prominent Nigerian banker, recently told U.S. authorities that he was concerned about his son's increasingly extremist religious views. Conservative Chosun Ilbo cited U.S. security officials as saying that the suspect has

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confessed to training with an al-Qaida bomb maker in Yemen. Citing The New York Times, the newspaper added that, if corroborated, Mr. Abdulmutallab's travel to Yemen for explosives instruction and corroboration with terrorists underscores the emergence of that country as a major hub for al-Qaida, perhaps beginning to rival the terror network's base in Pakistan.

EDITORIALS/OPINIONS

U.S. SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN ROK PREPARE AGAINST (POSSIBLE)
1N. KOREAN BIOCHEMICAL ATTACK
(Dong-a Ilbo, December 28, 2009, Page 31)

What if North Korea sprays bacteria or chemicals in subway stations in downtown Seoul? Can we guarantee that such an attack will never happen? USFK finds the possibility of the North dispersing biochemical agents to decimate many people an ever-present threat, and so it provides U.S. service members and their families in the ROK with gas masks. For children eight years old and younger, USFK is replacing old masks with new ones that look like space suits. The new masks reportedly have a built-in straw for drinking milk. In stark contrast to this, the ROKG does not have any training programs or countermeasures (for a North Korean biological attack), not to mention that it also does not provide protective masks for its citizens.

U.S. military authorities advise U.S. soldiers and their families to carry protective masks when they go out. If the fear of a biochemical attack from the North spreads among the families of U.S. servicemen, it could undermine the U.S.'s stable military presence in the ROK. If biochemical agents are dispersed in a crowded area, it will not only claim countless lives but also lead to total chaos. We should always prepare for the worst.

Nuclear weapons and missiles are not the only weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that North Korea has. Since the late North Korean leader Kim Il-sung issued a "Declaration of Chemicalization," which called for greater efforts to develop chemical-production facilities, in 1961, North Korea has been trying to develop and produce biochemical weapons. Since 1980, it has focused on manufacturing poison gas and bacterial weapons. North Korea currently has about 2,500 to 5,000 tons of chemical weapons stored in several different places. The communist state is also suspected

of having the capability to produce over 10 kinds of bacterial agents, including anthrax, smallpox, and cholera.

There is a risk that the North may use biochemical weapons to disrupt the ROK military in the event of an emergency or in peacetime. Some experts say that bacterial weapons, which often cause fatal diseases, are more deadly than other chemical or even nuclear weapons. We should bear in mind that, if North Korea mobilizes its special forces to launch a full-fledged chemical, biological, and radiological attack, it could pose a greater threat to the ROK than ordinary military units do. We should, therefore, not dismiss preparation measures taken by USFK against a possible North Korean biochemical attack as being "none of our business."

FEATURES

KOREAN-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST ROBERT PARK ENTERS NORTH KOREA... WHAT IS NORTH KOREA'S CHOICE?
(JoongAng Ilbo, December 28, 2009, Page 10; Excerpts)

By Reporter Lee Young-jong

News Analysis

An ROKG official said, "The issue of Mr. Park, a U.S. citizen, is basically a consular matter between the North and the U.S." The U.S. Department of State simply staked out its fundamental position

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that "the U.S. government places the highest priority on the protection and welfare of American citizens." However, it seems to be paying extra attention to this unexpected move, which came while the U.S. and the North were seeking additional dialogue after the recent visit to Pyongyang by U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth.

There appears to be three scenarios regarding North Korea's response. Some observers speculate that Pyongyang might use Mr. Park as a bargaining chip at the negotiation table with the U.S. as it did with the two U.S. female journalists who were arrested this past March for having illegally trespassed into North Korea. However, the situation has changed since then, when tensions were high between the U.S. and the North. (Therefore, as a result of the current environment), it is possible that the North may choose to resolve this issue smoothly through under-the-table contact. In 1996, when Korean-American Evan Hunziker was detained in North Korea, then-Democratic Representative Bill Richardson (currently New Mexico Governor) visited the North and secured his release after paying \$100,000 for Hunziker's hotel bill. North Korea may (also choose to) deport Park because the detention of a human rights activist may draw criticism from the international community.

STEPHENS